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Animating History and Memory: the Productions and Aesthetics of *Waltz with Bashir* and *Tower*

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Animating History and Memory: the Productions and Aesthetics of *Waltz with Bashir* and *Tower*

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Abstract

Animating History and Memory: the Productions and Aesthetics of *Waltz with Bashir* and *Tower*

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Films like Waltz with Bashir (2008) and Tower (2016) are unique in that they not only fit within accepted frameworks of documentary filmmaking, but they also use animation as their primary method of storytelling. Anabelle Honess Roe thoroughly explores animated documentaries in her book Animated Documentary, arguing that animation is used in these kinds of films to either "substitute" for traditional means to represent the real world (24), such as live action footage, or to "evoke" the psychology, emotional states, and other subjective experiences of an individual (25). Ultimately, Roe argues that animation is a suitable "representational strategy for documentary" filmmaking because of its "visual dialectic of absence and excess" (39). This report applies Roe's arguments to the analysis of the aesthetics and roles of animation in Waltz with Bashir and Tower. In both of the films' treatments of historical tragedies—the 1982 Lebanon War and massacres in the Beirut internment camps in Waltz with Bashir, and the 1966 sniper shooting at the University of Texas in Austin in Tower—the films posit their

animations as necessary means with which to both re-create the events surrounding those tragedies and to explore personal trauma. Yet while Waltz with Bashir has a more stylized form of animation to fit with its focus on the protean nature of personal memory, Tower uses a more mimetic form of animation, rotoscope, as a means of "mimetic substitution" (Roe 23) for live action footage. Unlike other writings on Waltz with Bashir, this report specifically offers close, formal analyses of specific scenes in both films. Through the analysis of particular scenes and by focusing on the films' animation production processes, their treatments of color, and how they ultimately transition from animation to live action footage, this report reveals how the "substitutive" and "evocative" functions of animation are at work in these films.

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Introduction

As Annabelle Honess Roe first states in *Animated Documentary,* "animation and documentary make an odd couple" (1). Whereas animation of any kind often seems divorced from photographic referentiality and "conjures up thoughts of comedy, children's entertainment and folkloric fantasies," documentary filmmaking "carries with it the assumptions of seriousness, rhetoric, and evidence" (1). Yet Roe's book essentially argues that both animation and documentary have shared histories and work well together in so-called "animated documentaries" that qualify as both documentary and animation (1). Unlike live action documentaries, which is often '"privileged"' as having a strong indexical link to the reality which it represents (Roscoe and Craig, quoted in Roe 29), animation posits a different "means of representation" (39) and works as a "representational strategy for documentary" because it provides for a "visual dialectic of absence and excess" (39). Animation inherently connotes an "absence" by virtue of the fact that an animated image is entirely made up, without the profilmic referent that comes with live action filmmaking (39), but also connotes an "excess" in that it can "take multiple different forms, all with a materiality, aesthetics, and style that goes above and beyond merely 'transcribing' reality" (14). This "absence and excess" found in animation, however, is also found in archival footage that is so often used in documentary filmmaking. Jaimie Baron, in her analysis of the film *The Tailenders* (2005) in her book *The Archive Effect*, mentions the tendency of the archive to be both "excessive" in the

amount of documents it contains, of which all cannot possibly be shown in a single film, but also "absent" in that there is always some information left out of the archive (109-110). As Roe ultimately argues, animation thus functions as a valid means of "substituting" for otherwise missing information that is often found in live action footage or archival documentation (23).

Roe argues that animation is used in one of three ways in animated documentaries: 1) as a means of "mimetic substitution", or in which animation substitutes for live action footage either to achieve a "reasonable likeness" to photographic imagery or to create a reasonable impression of a "re-enactment of historical events" (23); 2) as a means of "non-mimetic substitution," by which animation still reasonably represents an actual occurrence but is exaggerated enough that it does not serve to "make a visual link with reality or to create an illusion of a filmed image" (24); and 3) "evoke the reality experienced by the films' subjects," such as representing emotions, psychological states, or other subjective experiences "that are often quite different from those experienced by the majority of society" (25). This paper argues that the animated documentaries *Waltz with Bashir* (2008) and *Tower* (2016), both of which deal with individual traumatic experiences of historical tragedies (the 1982 Lebanon War in *Waltz with Bashir*, the 1966 school shooting at the University of Texas at Austin in *Tower*), each uses animation that falls within the one or all of the three ways as illustrated by Roe, albeit to different extents and with different emphases.

This paper further applies one of Roe's other arguments, that the animation of *Waltz with Bashir* "can be seen as a means of overcoming the effacement of a past blocked by traumatic experience" (155), to *Tower* as well. In *Waltz with Bashir*, animation works to substitute for live action and evoke the feelings of trauma about the war and the massacres, but it also functions as a therapeutic act for filmmaker Ari Folman ("About Ari: Interview with Ari") in which he can recover his lost memory of his involvement in the 1982 Lebanon War and the massacres at the Sabra and Shatila camps in Beirut. Given the film's focus on the protean nature of memory and by interweaving Folman's subjectivity into the animations of other people's accounts of the war and the massacres, the film presents stylized and sometimes surreal animations that belie "mimetic" and "non-mimetic" functions of substitution. *Tower*, on the other hand, which investigates the 1966 sniper shooting at the University of Texas at Austin through interviews of survivors and in reconstructions of the event of the shooting through archival footage and animated re-creations, positions its rotoscoped animation as a reliable enough form of "mimetic substitution." While it certainly stylizes the animation in ways for evocative purposes and draws attention to its own limitations in substituting for the survivors' actual experiences of the shooting, it nonetheless tries to placate the "dialectic of absence and excess" (Roe 39) found both within animation and the archive in order to reflect upon and ultimately make peace with the historical tragedy.

Waltz with Bashir has certainly garnered scholarly and critical attention since it came out in 2008. Indeed, it earned an Academy Award® nomination for "Best Foreign Language Film", a Golden Globe® award for "Best Foreign Language Film" and even the National Society of Film Critics award for "Best Film" of 2008 ("Waltz with Bashir: Awards"). Similar to Roe, scholar Joseph Kraemer has also explored the dialectics of representation of the film's animation and how the film fits within an "extensive history of short and feature-length nonfiction animations dating almost as far back as the invention of the motion picture camera itself" (57) and other films that deal with the "trauma of a tragedy" (59). Another scholar, Jeanne-Marie Viljoen, also assesses the substitutive and evocative functions of the animation like Roe does. However, Viljoen specifically looks at how the animation "demonstrates the possibility of representation standing in for or becoming experience" of the war and massacres (40). Raya Morag has explored other issues of the film in her book *Waltzing with Bashir: Perpetrator Trauma and Cinema*, such as how the film demonstrates "a shift in trauma suffered by victims to that suffered by perpetrators" and how the film fits within the then emergent new trend in Israeli documentary filmmaking at the time (3). Alas, there is certainly plenty of scholarly and critical work around *Waltz with Bashir*, much of which this report also overlaps. Yet some of the already written work on *Waltz with Bashir* allows for studies of the much newer and less talked about *Tower*.

Critics have noted how *Tower* also complicates the traditions of documentary filmmaking because of its animation and other facets of production. As Bilge Ebiri, the principal critic at *The Village Voice* writes, the animation and staging of the reenactments are obvious complicators to traditional documentary filmmaking ("Tense and True, 'Tower' Reconstructs America's First Mass School Shooting"). Though not as widely viewed as *Waltz with Bashir*, which took in over 11 million dollars worldwide at the box office ("Waltz with Bashir (2008) - Box Office Mojo"), *Tower* has garnered high critical acclaim, earning a score of 92/100 (an average of the scores of 22 critical reviews from major publications) on *Metacritic* ("*Tower*"). This report aims to provide a fresh reading of a film that has yet to be thoroughly explored by scholars, but in using the same methodologies with which to explore the older and more widely discussed *Waltz with Bashir*, this report also aims to contextualize the film in the broader discussion of animated documentary filmmaking.

Summary

To understand the various roles and functions of animation in these documentaries, I explore in depth both of the films' production processes, their treatments of color, and how they directly address the dialectic between animation and live action filmmaking.

The first section, "Animation Production and Indexicality", explores Roe's arguments on the importance of indexicality—the connection between a document (film,

animated image, painting, manuscript, etc.) and the physical, real world it represents or invokes—in animated documentaries and how the productions of *Waltz with Bashir* and *Tower* inform their respective indexical relationships. In doing so, I also follow Roe's example in looking at various paratextual and extratextual elements to better understand the productions and thus the ontological nature of the films' animations (14). *Waltz with Bashir* in particular has the aesthetic of what I term an "animated animatic", or a refined version of an animated storyboard. As will be explored in the filmmakers' choice in using Flash animation, and in combining elements of computer animation with hand-drawn techniques, the "animated animatic" aesthetic not only reflects a certain liminal stage of animation production, but also represents a liminal state of experience, one in-between personal memory of the past and the past as it actually was. The film's indexical relationships, both to the past events that it represents and to the present, profilmic elements of the time of the film's production, are also disrupted by the nature of the production of the animations.

Conversely, *Tower* uses both rotoscope animation and archival film footage with which to clearly piece together the 1966 shooting at the University of Texas at Austin. Rotoscope animation, in which animators create images by tracing over live action footage, is "doubly indexed" (Roe 87) by virtue of the fact that it has indexical traces to both the animators that draw the images by hand and to the profilmic figures whom were first recorded on live action film. While *Tower* is able to position its animation alongside

the live action archival footage because of rotoscope's close connection to the profilmic, it also clearly sets up a complex dialectic of representation by virtue of the production process of those animations. Instead of rotoscoping over the actual survivors, the filmmakers rotoscoped over actors who both say nearly word-for-word the accounts given by the survivors and re-enact what the survivors did during the shooting. Yet *Tower* tries to placate this dialectic by clearly drawing attention to the fact that both the rotoscope animation and the archival footage equally substitute for the other's otherwise missing information. If the archive is defined by its absence and excess, as Jaimie Baron notes (109-110), and if the archival document is privileged as an acceptable component in documentary filmmaking, then the animation in *Tower* is able to work alongside the archival as a valid "representational strategy for documentary" because it similarly provides for a "visual dialectic of absence and excess" (Roe 39). This will also be explored in the third section, "Intervention of Live Action and Metadiscourse of Film Production".

The second section "Color" addresses how both *Waltz with Bashir* and *Tower* manipulate the color schemes of their animations. While color is not necessarily the most unique element that distinguishes animation from live action, it is nevertheless a part of the various "qualities that inform our interpretation of the images we see" in animated documentaries (Roe 38). Moreover, color is a defining component of the films' aesthetics. The methodology of this section will involve a formalist reading of how the

films manipulate color, with focuses on sound, dialogue, editing, shot duration, and, for lack of a more apt term for animation, mise-en-scène. In *Waltz with Bashir*, a yellow monochromatic color scheme is the aesthetic marker for the massacres at the Shatila and Sabra camps. Understanding why the film uses yellow requires a close reading of a particular visual motif: yellow flares. The film visually shows the flares illuminating both Folman's recurring dream and the various flashback scenes as described by two interviewees who were present during the massacres. Yet the flares are particularly unique to Folman's memory of the massacres, and are for him among the last vestiges of the fact that the massacres indeed happened. For Folman, the flares are metaphorical indexes to the massacres, and are what essentially make his dream and muddled memory exist at all. The flares thus function narratively and aesthetically as the primary light sources that make certain scenes yellow.

Tower depicts the tragedy of the shooting in a different scheme: black-and-white. However, *Tower* also presents many scenes in vibrant color. The dichotomy between color and black-and-white, and the way the film transitions from color to black-and-white, reveal the importance of the film's particular choice in color schemes. Whereas color connotes a subjectively isolated, peaceful normalcy, in which characters are both unaware of the shooting and caught up in their own individual, blissful worlds, the black-and-white scheme functions as the main visual aesthetic to indicate characters' awareness of the shooting occurring and their physical presence in that event. Additionally, black-

and-white also serves as an example of "faked markers of indexicality" (Roe 42) to aesthetically fit with the black-and-white archival footage. In doing so, the scheme emphasizes the shooting as an historical event. Alas, in presenting all of the survivors' accounts of the shooting in black-and-white, the film aesthetically pieces together what are essentially private, traumatic experiences of the survivors into the historical fabric of a public, national tragedy. It is specifically in the moments when the film transitions from color to black-and-white that the narrative and aesthetic functions of the two color schemes are evident.

The final section, "Intervention of Live Action and Metadiscourse of Film Production", examines the dialectic of representation in the films' animations by analyzing how both films incorporate live action footage. Similar to the previous section, the methodology involves close formal readings of the ways the films present live action. While *Waltz with Bashir* is predominantly composed of animation, it ultimately ends with a montage of archival video footage of the aftermath of one of the massacres. As Roe argues, the "footage only makes sense in the context of the ninety minutes that precedes it" (168). This section takes Roe's argument further by closely analyzing the last sequence of animation in the film, both in how it prepares for the transition to the footage and how it ultimately does so. In essence, because the animated sequence's imagery and sounds aptly match those of the footage, the sequence partly functions as a defense of the animation overall as an accurate enough means in representing the massacres.

Conversely, that the footage does not show *how* the massacres occurred demonstrates the footage's indexical shortcomings. It is in these shortcomings that the film further defends its use of animation in a documentary format, regardless of how mediated, stylized, and subjective it is.

While *Tower* already incorporates live action archival footage, it eventually transitions away from the animated interviews of actors to the live action interviews of the actual survivors. The transitions serve various functions: 1) they signal as climactic points in the narrative when a character is confirmed to have survived the shooting; 2) they act as temporal leaps from the past to the present of production; and 3) they help absolve the initial "ontological confusion" (Roe 57) of the rotoscope animations by revealing the actual survivors as defining referents. Moreover, these transitions function in the film's broader scheme of unveiling its methods of production, both in animation and in filmmaking. This metadiscourse not only "authenticate[s]" *Tower* as documentary, as Roe might argue (63), but also bears forth the artifices of the filmmaking process in an attempt to placate its dialectics of representation. Becoming transparent in its artifice and in transitioning to live action and to the present time of the actual survivors, *Tower* aesthetically attempts to make peace with a national tragedy, both for the sake of the survivors and the film viewers.

Animation Production and Indexicality

Whereas traditional, live action documentaries arguably have a clear, perceivable connection—visual and/or aural—to "reality" (29), animation has a more unclear relationship to it. As Roe indicates:

> There is no physical causal link between animated image and the reality it might depict, so animation cannot evidence or witness things as we might have done with our own eyes. What we see in an animated image did not exist in front of the camera in that form. (37)

Indexicality is thus an important issue in the discourse of documentary filmmaking and one that Roe stresses when exploring the "ontological differences between animation and live action, in terms of their relationships with reality" (2). While much of the discussion of the indexical nature of photographic images revolves around how those images resemble their actual, physical, profilmic referents, the discourse on the indexicality of animation not only includes how animated imagery represents or relates to a particular "reality," but also how sounds relate to their assigned animated images (Roe 2) and how the animations connect back to the animators.

Indeed, in hand-drawn animation, for example, Birgitta Hosea claims there exists the "'the trace of the presence of an artist's body,'" (Hosea 363, quoted in Roe 37). Bill Schaffer, who applies Deleuzean concepts in his theories on animation, echoes Hosea's statement, claiming, "What distinguishes animation from cinematography here is not the 'stuff' of each frame, but *the way the animator puts himself in between frames*" (206,

emphasis in original). While Schaffer's main argument is that animation's indexicality lies in the Deleuzean concept of the "any-instant-whatever", his point about animators inserting themselves in the films echoes a critical concept in animation: that animated imagery and movements—most especially those done by hand—have indexical relationships with their actual creator(s). Yet despite the presence of hand-drawn animation in *Waltz with Bashir* and *Tower*, both films complicate all of their indexical relationships through various means.

Waltz with Bashir does so through its various stages of production, use of Flash animation software, and its "animated animatic" aesthetic. While *Tower* has a more comfortable indexical relationship to its past because of its rotoscope animation—which involves the direct tracing of images from already filmed ones—it complicates its link to the shooting by rotoscoping performers instead of the actual survivors. It tries to absolve the indexical problems by corresponding the characters' words with the survivors' actual accounts and the animated imagery with archival footage.

Waltz with Bashir

The indexical relationship of *Waltz with Bashir* to the past and to "reality" is complicated because of the production techniques and the particular craftsmanship of the animated images. The filmmakers first recorded, in live action form, both interviews of actual people involved in the Lebanon War and performed scenarios that would help the animators create the film's flashback and dream sequences. The animators then drew

animatics—or animated storyboards—using the live action footage as a reference ("Surreal Soldiers: Making *Waltz with Bashir*"). Finally, using Flash animation software, the animators compiled rigs and hundreds of individual animation parts and color shades with which to animate the characters.

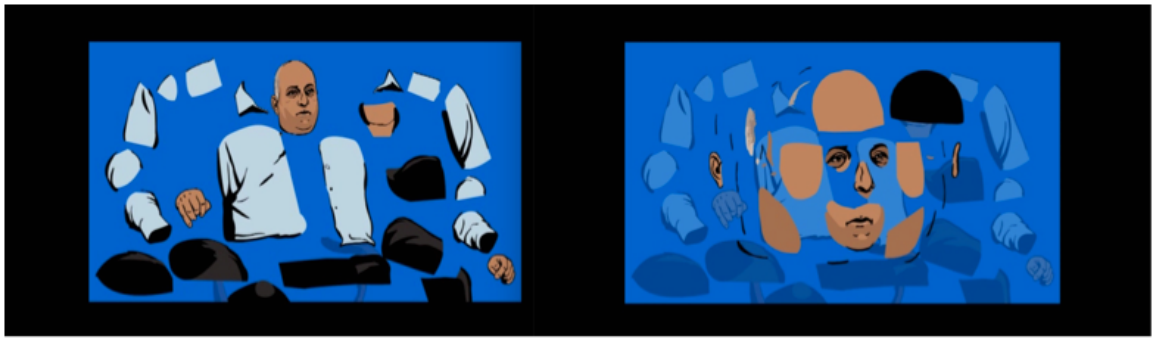

Figure 1 "Building the Scenes - Animatics": Shots of the multiple animated parts and rigs for the animated Dror Harazi

Overall, *Waltz with Bashir* is composed of both 2D animation and 3D animation, with 2D being the dominant aesthetic ("Surreal Soldiers: Making *Waltz with Bashir*"). What is striking on first view of the film is how close the animated human characters resemble their actual counterparts: the facial and overall body compositions of the animated characters are faithful enough to the actual people that, as Roe dutifully points out, one might misread the animations as products of rotoscoping (162). On the contrary, while the animators certainly used the live action footage as reference for movement, they by no means traced the movement from the live action recording; they created movements that merely mimicked the filmed ones. Moreover, though in some instances

the animated movements are crisp and fluid enough as to seem meticulously composed by hand, most of the film seems more like a refined *animatic* than a fully realized animation. This is often evident through the noticeably rigid character movements and flatness in body volume. Folman has expressed that the rigidity of movement is mostly due to the film's low budget ("Surreal Soldiers: Making *Waltz with Bashir*"). Flash animation thus seems to be an apt software for the film because of its accessibility and budget-friendly nature. Yet it is for these reasons as well that Flash is an appropriate tool for producing animation in *Waltz with Bashir.* Flash allows for a dialectical presence of both hand-drawn images and software induced movement that produces the semblance of a refined animatic.[1] It is this "animated animatic" aesthetic, as I call it, through which the film explores the personal memories of the war and the massacres.

The "animated animatic" aesthetic of the film is not merely a by-product of budget constraints, but rather a primary aesthetic of visual storytelling that serves the film's agenda. The aesthetic serves as an appropriate means in the film's re-creating, re-molding, and re-exploring the memories of various people. Just as Roe argues that animation "exceeds its role as a simple stand-in for live action" in that it "draws attention to itself" (Roe 72), *Waltz with Bashir'*s animation also draws attention to its unrefined nature and to the lack of detail that produces fluid movement. In doing so, it also reveals

[1] Yet even the hand-drawn images are abstracted enough from their actual counterparts as to seem somewhat unrealistic. *Waltz with Bashir*'s art director and illustrator David Polonsky claims that, although he is right-hand dominant, he made the drawings with his left hand in order to create the stylized distortions in character anatomy and volume. He admits that he eventually became proficient in more realistically drawing characters with his left hand ("Surreal Soldiers: Making *Waltz with Bashir*").

its relationship to the past events it represents. Just as the surreal imagery and sporadic content of the film reveal the critical inability for both Folman and the film to fill in for missing information of the past, the "animated animatic" flaunts the unfilled frames that would otherwise produce more fluid animated movements. The aesthetic thus fits well with the subject of personal memory. Just as the animatic is a liminal stage in animation production, the "animated animatic" aesthetically serves as a liminal state between the Folman's memory of the past and the actual happening of the past.

The process of animation also reveals that the film divorces its animations from the present time of production of its live action interviews. Again, the film's animation is based less on the movement of the initially recorded live action footage and more on the subsequent animatics ("Surreal Soldiers: Making *Waltz with Bashir*"). From filming to storyboarding to animating, the production process of *Waltz with Bashir* illustrates that the film is removed from the past not just by virtue of the time in which it was made (the film was done around twenty four years after the events of the war), but also because the animators abstract the live action footage from its own present time of production. Moreover, as Roe correctly points out, the interviews, re-enactments, and dream sequences all share a particular style of animation (163), and because of this, "dreams and memories are given equal epistemological weight to the present-day interviews" (163). In fact, Joseph Kraemer even argues that because animation is used throughout, the film "functions in its entirety as one extended reenactment" (60). *Waltz with Bashir*'s

production thus creates a profoundly complex indexical relationship to not just the past, but also to the present.

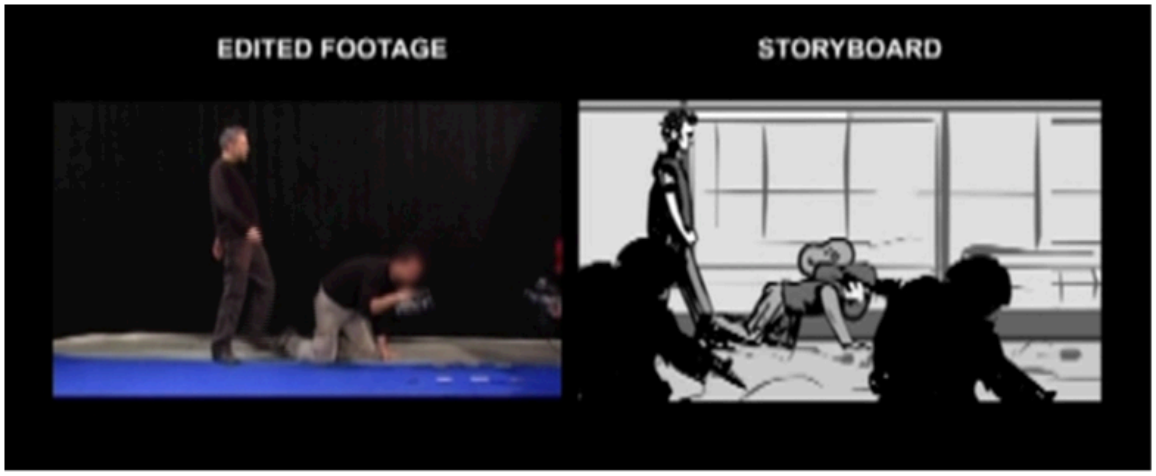

Figure 2 “Surreal Soldiers: Making *Waltz with Bashir*”: Comparison of live action video footage (left) with subsequent, rough animatic (right)

Figure 3 “Surreal Soldiers: Making *Waltz with Bashir*”: Comparison between rough animatic (top) and "final", refined animatic as it appears in the film

Tower

Unlike *Waltz with Bashir*, *Tower* is indeed composed of rotoscoped animation. Because of the seemingly close relationship that the rotoscoped image has to the profilmic, it fits well within a school of animation theory in which animation is thought to be inherently more connected to the photographic rather than the still drawn image. Thomas Lamarre reveals that early film theorist Imamura Taihei, writing in the 1930s, believed that animation was inherently more dependent on photography and the moving photographic image than with the still, painted image (223). Tom Gunning echoes Imamura's theory in more recent writing, claiming, "animation drew its inspiration—and its technical process—from the *photographic* visualization of the instant" (46, emphasis in original). Alas, while Imamura and Gunning have argued that animation inherently takes more influence from photography than drawing, rotoscoped animation arguably has the most direct relationship to the photographic than any other method of animation. Lamarre even directly connects Imamura's theories to modern conceptions of rotoscoping, as he writes, "Imamura's emphasis on how the animation[…]is rendered by drawing the photographed movement of a person frame by frame suggests that he has something like rotoscoping in mind" (225). Indeed, the rotoscope animation in *Tower* clearly indicates a photographic nature in that it recalls the fact that the animators traced over live action film recordings. Moreover, this process of tracing creates in part what Roe argues is the double index of rotoscoped animation: there is a "presence of the

interviewee in front of the camera, and the presence of the artist in the process of translating the video image to animation" (87). Rotoscope animation makes for not only a somewhat reliable index of the actual people who were first recorded in live action film, but also an index of the animators.

Figure 4 "Behind the Scenes Animation": Sample of how the filmmakers rotoscoped over live action footage

However, *Tower*'s overall production complicates its other indexical relationships with the past and present to a comparable extent as *Waltz with Bashir.* In general, *Tower* is composed of both archival footage and rotoscope animation to comparable extents. The archival footage, ranging from amateur 8mm films to newsreel footage, was recorded either around or during the time of the shooting. *Tower* also includes archival sounds, such as news broadcasts, phone conversations, and on-site interviews, which are all interspersed between film footage and animations. The animations, however, are composed of rotoscoped backgrounds and character actions. The characters are either talking directly to the camera about their experiences on the day of the shooting or re-enacting those experiences as they had allegedly happened. Most importantly, the

animated characters are actors performing as certain survivors. The testimonies[2] that they give are nearly word-for-word of the survivors' actual accounts, while the actors' re-enactments are as close as possible to the survivors' actual actions and experiences during the shooting.

Figure 5 *Tower*: Left: Officer Martinez, played by Louie Arnette, recounting his experience of the shooting; Right: Arnette re-enacting the event of the shooting

Overall, *Tower* paradoxically draws attention to the artificiality of the animations but also tries to qualify the animations as reliable alternatives to archival footage. Occasionally the film will dub animated character voices with archival voice recordings, or overlay simulated scratch marks and dirt over the animations to draw a comparison to the worn-down conditions of film that are evident in the archival footage. These simulated scratch marks are examples of what Roe describes in her reading of the animated film *Battle 360* as "faked markers of indexicality" that help "authenticate the

[2] Roe argues that in certain contexts interviews can also be referred to as testimonies if they involve "bearing witness, giving evidence and asserting and affirming the truth" (75). Since both *Waltz with Bashir* and *Tower* have interviews with those that directly "witnessed" or experienced something, I will follow Roe's example and often use the term "testimony" when referring to the spoken accounts that characters give in interviews.

digitally created images, and the text in which they are placed, as documentary" (Roe 42). Returning to what Roe had initially argued, however, animation works well as a "representational strategy for documentary" because it provides for a "visual dialectic of absence and excess" (39). Indeed, *Tower* compounds the "visual dialectic" of its animation with various other dialectics from its production. While the photographic/ animated and past/present dialectics are obvious, these inform the film's main, and most complex, dialectic of representation. On one hand, the archival footage and sounds give the impression of an authentic representation of and relationship to the past, whereas the animated performances, made in the present of the film's production, complicate that relationship. However, the film also asserts a metadiscourse on the production of its animations. For example, there is often an animated person holding an 8mm camera before the film cuts to corresponding archival footage. The film visually argues for the necessity of using animation as a "mimetic substitution" (Roe 23) to fill in the gaps from otherwise missing archival footage. Conversely, the archival footage does the same thing and fills in for missing animation.

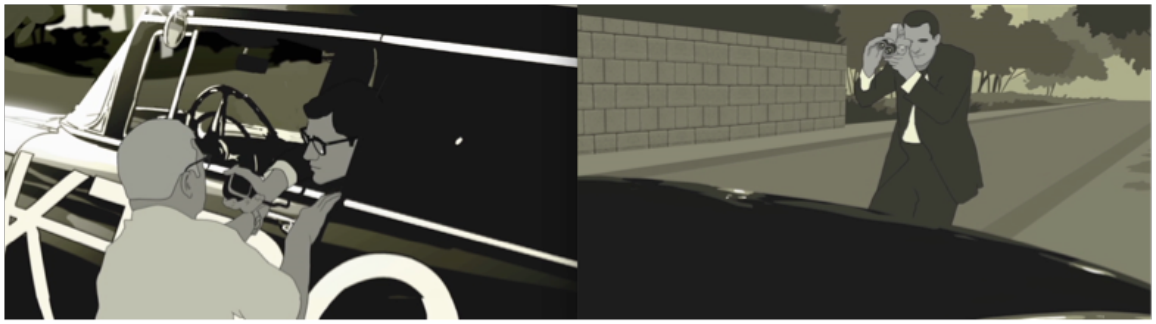

Figure 6 *Tower*: Left: animation of Neal Spelce interviewing man ducking behind car; Right: cut to animation of man with 8mm camera

Figure 7 *Tower*: Cut to archival footage of man speaking with Neal Spelce

Alas, while *Tower*'s animations work in a similar fashion as those in *Waltz with Bashir*, in that they often fill in for otherwise missing information, *Tower* positions its rotoscope animation as a reliable, if sometimes stylized, form of "mimetic substitution" for missing archival footage. *Waltz with Bashir*, on the other hand, uses a style of animation to further complicate the past and emphasize the precarious nature of memory. By combining animation with, and editing it in between, archival footage and sounds, *Tower* sets up its animation as a necessary addition with which to most clearly tell its story. In short, whereas *Waltz with Bashir* uses mediated and stylized animation as a

means of emphasizing the protean nature of individual memory, *Tower* attempts to clarify the past by piecing together personal memories of the interviewed survivors by using animation as a capable, even necessary, substitute for the archive.

Color

Waltz with Bashir

Waltz with Bashir not only presents re-creations of events, places, and people during the 1982 Lebanon War, but it also tries to pinpoint Folman's own place and role in the massacres. Every animated sequence has a particular color scheme, and each scheme serves certain purposes. This section will focus on the film's particular use of a yellow monochromatic scheme, which the film uses for scenes that directly involve the massacres. The scenes in yellow include a recurring dream of Folman's and flashbacks of the massacres (or events immediately prior to and after them) based on the testimonies of Folman, ex-soldier Dror Harazi, and television journalist Ron Ben-Yishai. The yellow scheme becomes an indelible marking throughout the film, but most importantly it becomes emblematic of Folman's interpretation of the massacres.

One of the first instants of the yellow scheme is shown entirely in shades of yellow and black, with heavy contrast between the two. This scene is not a flashback, but a recurring dream of Folman's. The scene is of his younger self and two others lying in the ocean off a beach in Beirut. The men then gradually arise, walk out of the water and get dressed into their army uniforms. Throughout this sequence, which appears to take place at night, several brightly colored yellow flares slowly descend from the sky. These flares serve as important thematic and aesthetic underpinnings in the film: they are both diegetic light sources that light the sky in this sequence and also symbolic light sources

that illuminate, and haunt, Folman's memory. They also appear in the various flashbacks of the massacres, but these flares seem unique to Folman's experience, as neither Harazi nor Ben-Yishai directly acknowledge them in their interviews. Indeed, the flares appear as stylistic visual cues that inform what Folman as filmmaker is hoping to discover in Harazi's and Ben-Yishai's testimonies. He hopes that their testimonies will illuminate his own lost memory and fill in for what is missing. Indeed, even with animation, *Waltz with Bashir* hardly re-creates the massacres as they actually happened (most of the violence is off-screen). So while the animation sometimes serves to "substitute" for live action,[3] the flares are symbolic substitutions for an animated re-creation of the massacres. To understand the use of yellow in the scenes involving the massacres, then, is to understand the various roles of the flares.

[3] While I argue that *Waltz with Bashir* sometimes positions its animation as a form of "substitution," Roe also argues that its animation transcends the function of substitution and fulfills a different one "of bringing the temporally distal into closer proximity by allowing filmmakers to aesthetically weave themselves into the past" (16).

Figure 8 *Waltz with Bashir*: Top Left: older Folman staring out at the flares; Top Right: cut to shot of the flares falling from sky as the men float in the water; Bottom Left: cut to close-up of younger Folman staring up at the flares; Bottom Right: later shot of the men emerging from the water and getting dressed

Folman's dream first appears near the beginning of the film.[4] On screen is an older version of Folman—the filmmaker himself—standing on a beach pier and looking out at the ocean. He begins to ruminate over his past involvement in the war, and in voice-over, he explains, "That night, for the first time in 20 years…I had a flashback of the war in Lebanon. Not just Lebanon, West Beirut. Not just Beirut, but the massacre at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps." After he says, "Not just Beirut", the film cuts to a

[4] Folman and art director David Polonsky claim that the first frame drawn for the film was of this dream, and that the color scheme helped set a precedent for the rest of the film ("Surreal Soldiers: Making *Waltz with Bashir*").

medium close-up of Folman's back. As he finishes his sentence about the massacre, suddenly, in a "tracking pan movement," the "camera"[5] follows Folman as he turns to his left. Suddenly Folman's figure and the background become brownish yellow, with the emblematic flares falling from the sky. The film then finally cuts to the thematic dream sequence of the men lying in the ocean. So the yellow flares thus serve for both the viewer and Folman himself as visual and symbolic sources of light that, in essence, create this very scene. In other words, the yellow flares are the very sources that make Folman's memory of the massacres exist at all. Thus the film can only illustrate scenes that involve the massacres in a yellow monochromatic scheme because the flares are yellow. Not until much later in the film, where Folman starts interviewing Harazi and Ben-Yishai, does the film return to this yellow scheme.

Folman even directly acknowledges the significance of the flares near the end of the film, which re-creates of the events of the massacre—before and after—in yellow. The film does this by way of interviews with Dror Harazi and Ron Ben-Yishai, both of whom were present at the camps around the time the massacres took place. Through these interviews, and the film's re-creation of the events according to their testimonies, the film reveals the historical context of the yellow flares and begins to piece together

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[5] Roe uses "camera" in quotations for describing the simulated movements in animation in terms of how they would appear if done with live action camera movements. I follow her example and use "camera" and other camera movements in quotation marks since the established language for describing camera movement is more accessible and far less esoteric than that for describing the actual mechanisms of movement in animation.

Folman's place and role. In one scene, Dror Harazi claims in his interview that the Christian Phalangists planned to enter the camps in order to "purge" them of "Palestinian Terrorists", before the Israeli army would enter and occupy the camps. The film cuts between Harazi's interview and the re-created flashbacks, while continuing some of Harazi's testimony in voice-over. When Harazi stops talking, the film presents a series of shots of the Phalangists walking into the camps, and the "camera" then "tilts" upwards towards the sky as yellow flares fill the space and the rest of the screen goes black. The film cuts to a longer, wider display of the camps, and as the flares continue falling slowly, the rest of the space brightens up. As armed men walk away from the camps towards the viewer, Harazi says, "The next morning, they began to bring out civilians".

Figure 9 *Waltz with Bashir*: Left: Phalangists walking into camps; Right: cut to "long shot" of Phalangists

Figure 10 *Waltz with Bashir*: Left: "tilt" up towards the sky; Right: darkening of sky and emergence of flares

Figure 11 *Waltz with Bashir*: Left: cut to wider display of camps as flares fall; Right: yellow daylight returns as Phalangists exit camps

The most obvious implication is that the flares and sudden darkening and brightening of the color scheme create a visual ellipsis from one day to the next. The significance of the flares, however, seems more serious. The flares now appear in a different context other than in Folman's dream, but the thematic weight of the flares carries over into this scene. Again, Folman's dream is a reminder of his lost memory about his involvement in the massacres, but now the flares again serve to fill a particular gap. Indeed, the absence of Harazi's direct commentary during the visual ellipsis also indicates Harazi's absence from that night itself (though certainly not from the other

massacres the following day), so the flares not only fill in the empty space of the dark sky, but also fill in for the lack of memory of the massacres. It is only later in the film, when Ron Ben-Yishai testifies that a soldier told him of having heard about a massacre occurring that night, that the flares also serve as the closest indexes of the massacres having actually happened.

The flares appear two other times later in the film, and it is through these instances that their significance becomes clearer. In the last interview with Harazi, he describes that the headquarters for the Israeli army at the camps is at the top of a tall building. In a flashback, the film reveals in a medium shot a younger version of Harazi in front of the supposed building. In voice-over, Folman asks Harazi how tall the building was, to which Harazi answers, "Tall enough to see everything". As he answers, the film, in a "crane shot", begins to scale the exterior of the building, moving away from the younger Harazi. In the voice-over, Harazi ends his answer by saying, "They surely had a better view than I did". The "animated crane shot" continues, revealing a small group of soldiers looking out from the top of the building, until finally the "camera" moves past this group and stops at the dark sky above. Finally, the flares appear, serving as the only sources of light in the dark sky. In moving past the men on the tower before revealing the flares, the film also grants the flares, which are technically higher than the men, as having ultimately the "better view" over the landscape. It is significant that this is the last time Harazi appears on screen or speaks in the film, and so when Harazi can no

longer tell the story, the flares again visually take over the space and fill in the narrative gaps that cannot be accounted for.

Figure 12 *Waltz with Bashir*: Left: young Harazi; Right: "crane shot" up the building

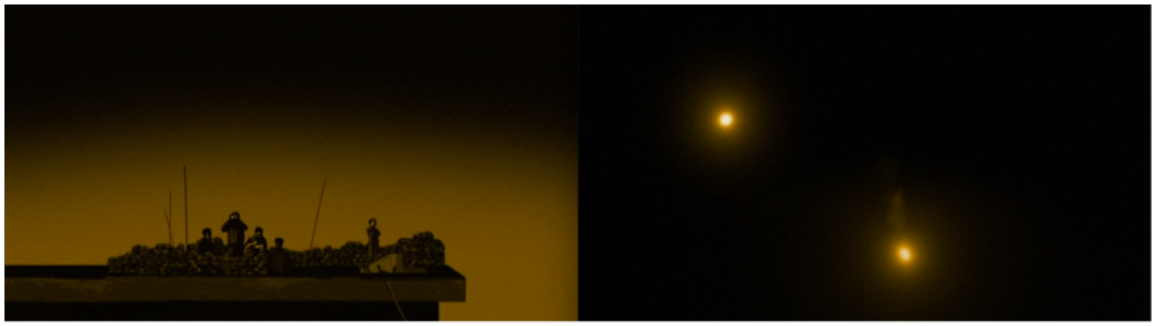

Figure 13 *Waltz with Bashir*: Left: men at the top of the building; Right: "crane shot" continues to the sky, where flares emerge

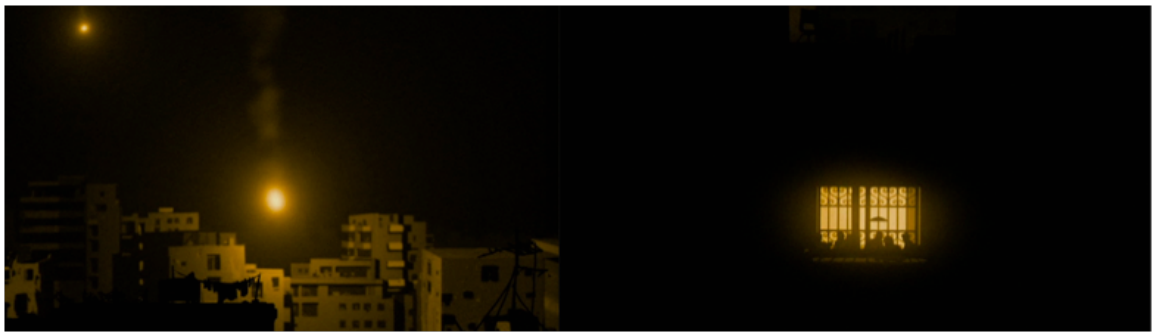

Figure 14 *Waltz with Bashir*: Left: "tracking shot" of flares falling; Right: focus on yellow-lit window

Figure 15 *Waltz with Bashir*: Left: cut to "dolly shot" across window; Right: “dolly” to Ron Ben-Yishai conversing with soldier

These flares also serve as visual focal points for elliptical editing again, as well as narrative cues for transitioning from the end of Harazi’s testimony to the continuation of Ron Ben-Yishai’s. In a “tracking crane shot”, the film focuses on one flare at the center of the frame, tracking it as it gradually descends towards a group of buildings. As the flare falls behind some black-shaded buildings in the foreground, the “camera” continues “moving down” at the same pace as the flare, and reveals a gated window brightly lit in a washed-out yellow. At this point, Ben-Yishai takes over from Harazi and continues in voice-over his account of one night in the camps. The film cuts to a closer exterior shot of the window, and in a “dolly shot” gradually reveals a regiment of soldiers inside a dining room conversing at a table. The younger Ben-Yishai is revealed leaning up against a wall, listening to the commanding officer. In voice-over, the older Ben-Yishai recounts that the officer told him that another massacre was happening, and some of the soldiers at the table had already witnessed some killings. It is important to understand the specific grammar with which Ben-Yishai recounts this, as he claims that the officer said

to him, "'Ron…my men say there's a massacre *going on* in the camps'" (emphasis added). Ben-Yishai thus offers a temporal clarity to the massacres: these were killings that were ongoing for a while, but the one particular massacre Ben-Yishai mentions was one that had occurred the very night the officer told him about it. That a massacre was "going on" at night also suggests the flares were fired at the same time. It is not until the third scene involving flares that Folman confirms this, when he finally addresses their significance to his own memory of the event.

As Folman speaks with his friend Ori Savan, he begins drawing conclusions about the massacres. When Savan asks Folman where he was and what he did during the massacres, the film cuts to a flashback, to another image of flares going off in the dark sky. Folman attests that he was on a rooftop, looking up at the lit sky and, for the first time in the film, acknowledges that these were flares. Folman finally concludes that these flares "must have helped" the Phalangists commit the massacres at night, so they could see what they were doing. The "camera" drastically "pulls away" from the flares, over and across several buildings, revealing even more flares across the sky. The "camera" gradually halts on a rooftop of soldiers shooting them into the air. A cut to the younger Folman on the rooftop reveals him staring up at the sky and at his fellow soldiers. Off-screen, Savan asks if Folman fired any of the flares himself, to which Folman replies, "Is that important? Does it make any difference if I fired them or if I just saw the flares that helped people shoot others?" Indeed, the younger Folman is never

shown firing any flares himself. But Savan offers his own psychoanalysis. He says, “In your state of mind at that time, it didn’t really make a difference. You can’t remember the massacre because in your opinion, the murderers and those around them are the same circle.” Savan assesses that firing (or not firing) the flares was, in Folman’s mind, the same as directly committing the massacres.

Figure 16 *Waltz with Bashir*: Left: flares light up again in the sky; Right: "camera" pulls back from the flares

Figure 17 *Waltz with Bashir*: Left: soldiers firing flares in the sky; Right: cut to younger Folman on the roof

Savan’s analysis thus provides a suitable answer to why flares appear in Folman’s dream of him emerging from the ocean, and it is evident that Folman himself accepts this

answer considering that his older self no longer appears on screen nor offers his direct commentary after this exchange with Savan. If firing the flares is the same as committing the massacres for Folman, then it makes sense for the film to present the flares as alternatives to a visual re-creation of the massacres. Savan says earlier in the film, "Memory is dynamic. It's alive. If some details are missing…memory fills the holes with things that never happened." Indeed, it is Folman's memory of the flares, regardless of whether he actually fired them or not, that "fills the holes" of his role in the massacres.

Tower

Since *Tower* is concerned in being factually accurate (or at least accurate enough) in its storytelling and re-enactments, its animation most often fits within Roe's theory of "mimetic substitution", in that it allegedly re-creates the actual events of the shooting in a reliable fashion. Nevertheless, the film stylistically plays with color schemes to fit certain purposes. While some scenes are in color, most of the animations are in black-and-white for two primary reasons: 1) it functions as the dominant mode with which to represent the past, as it fits with the black-and-white scheme of much of the archival footage in the film; and 2) it visually connotes the shooting as something shared on the level of national consciousness and, at another level, as a shared physical experience among characters that lived through it. Essentially, any animated scene in black-and-white corresponds to the fact that the on-screen characters are aware of the shooting occurring (or having occurred) and that their lives are (or were) in danger. Conversely,

almost any animated scene in color reflects that character's blissful unawareness of, or even psychological displacement from, the shooting. These colored animations correspond to peaceful, individual experiences that seem far away from the tragic event. For example, many of these color scenes happen before the shooting begins, before characters learn about it. Yet even after the shooting commences, characters that have yet to become aware of it, and the potential danger to their lives, are still in color. Naturally, all the animated characters giving interviews are in black-and-white, as they speak from a time after the shooting. Like the color yellow and the massacres in *Waltz with Bashir*, the black-and-white scheme and the shooting are codependent and coexisting in *Tower*.

The awareness/unawareness dichotomy of these two color schemes is most evident when characters immediately experience the shooting—either by being shot or recognizing that, if not a shooting, that *something* serious is happening—as color immediately transitions to black-and-white. The first instant is at the beginning before the shooting begins. Claire Wilson James, one of the survivors, recalls herself and her then boyfriend Thomas drinking coffee at the student union, which the film presents in brightly toned colors. The non-diegetic addition of The Mamas & the Papas's song "Monday, Monday" on the soundtrack contributes a blissful and nostalgic mood. When Claire and Thomas leave, they walk out onto the main mall in front of the clock tower. The background, however, is now in black-and-white, with only Claire and Thomas remaining in color. The shot is brief, but the film is preparing for when the shooting will

begin. More importantly, the film is preparing for when the characters will experience the shooting, as well as when the shooting itself will become an historical event.

Figure 18 *Tower*: Left: Claire and Tom walking out of the student union; Right: cut to Claire and Thomas walking onto the main mall, with photographic background in black-and-white

The film cuts to black-and-white archival footage of the sniper firing from the tower balcony. The song stops at the jarring sound of the gunshot. The interviewed Claire (animated) first describes the sensation of the "jolt" of the bullet, and the film then cuts back to the past Claire and Thomas. Though both are still in color, their movements are slowed down. Immediately at the instant of another gunshot, the characters turn into white silhouettes upon a chromatic red background.[6] Claire is shot, and as she falls to the ground, both she and Thomas reappear in black-and-white. Thomas is shot and killed shortly afterwards. The emergence of black-and-white thus visually connotes the moment Claire and Thomas experience the shooting. It is simple and easy to understand,

[6] This aesthetic choice further grounds *Tower* in the historical milieu of the mid-late 1960s, as it clearly resembles the animations in the opening credits of Sergio Leone's "Man with No Name" Trilogy, the last of which, *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*, came out in 1966, the same year as the UT massacre ("*The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*: Release Info").

but as the shooting continues and more characters become involved, the transitions to black-and-white reveal the more nuanced levels of the film's color choices. Transitions from color to black-and-white for other characters are similar to the first one, as they reflect the characters' changes in both mental and physical awareness. Moreover, these transitions also emphasize how their individual experiences weave into the larger context of a national tragedy.

Figure 19 *Tower*: Left: archival footage of gunshot; Right: moment before Claire is shot

Figure 20 *Tower*: Left: Claire is shot; Right: Claire falls to the ground and becomes black-and-white

Unlike Claire, many of the other interviewed characters are never shot, but they still "become" black-and-white when they learn of the shooting. Houston McCoy, a

police officer at the time, recalls the moment he drove up to the university after receiving a radio call. As McCoy, who is animated in color, approaches the campus, Lucky Luke Jacobs's "Waltz Across Texas" appears to play diegetically on the car radio. After he looks out through his windshield, the film cuts to two pieces of black-and-white archival footage of people hiding behind their cars, suggesting McCoy is looking at them and that these people are involved in and aware of the shooting. The film cuts back to McCoy looking through his rearview mirror. Suddenly there is a sound of a gunshot, and the song immediately stops playing. The film cuts to an exterior shot of McCoy looking out his car door window, and a black-and-white color scheme gradually begins to spread from his face until it covers his entire body and car. As this happens, the interviewed McCoy recalls, "Then, I finally realized something was happening that I aint never seen before." The film again visually connotes a terror-inducing moment of realization. By first inserting the archival footage of people hiding, the film visually reminds the viewers that the shooting is happening. By cutting between this archival footage and the animated McCoy—similar to how the film edits between the animated cameraman and archival footage (see above in "Animation Production and Indexicality")—the film gives the impression of shared, coherent space and time between them. Doing so also sets up for when McCoy will be enwrapped in that black-and-white world as well.

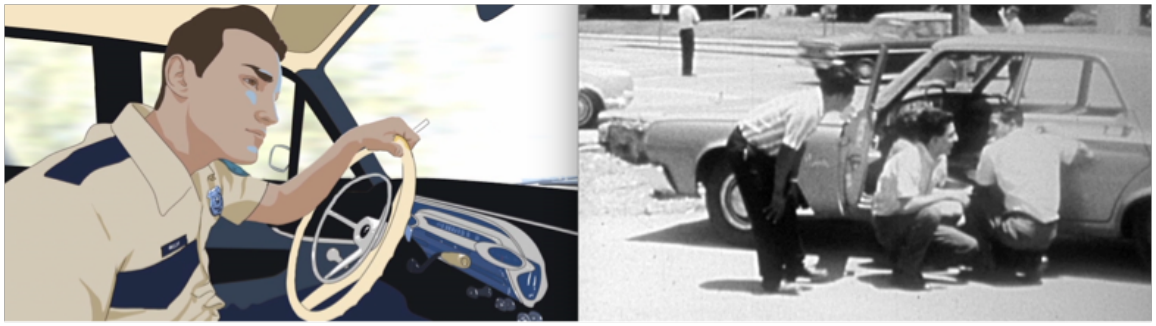

Figure 21 *Tower*: Left: McCoy looks through his windshield; Right: cut to archival footage of people hiding behind car

Figure 22 *Tower*: Left: When McCoy hears gunshot, black-and-white begins to bleed over his body; Right: black-and-white completely takes over

Soon after this scene, the film expands the aesthetic role of black-and-white. It not only becomes the means with which to represent the historicity of the shooting, but to also represent the physical experience of trauma and fear. In an interview, McCoy explains that when he exited his car and surveyed the tower, "[T]he hair just stood on the back of my neck." He naturally felt scared, and while he initially thought members of the Black Panthers had initiated a "revolution", he realized that whatever was actually happening "was bigger than me." Again, the black-and-white scheme serves as the primary means with which to represent the historical magnitude of the event, as

something that encompassed a wide collective. Moreover, when McCoy reveals his sense of terror, black-and-white also becomes inextricably connected to an individual's feelings of fear. A subsequent scene involving another officer, Captain Raymond Martinez, elaborates on this connection. Martinez initially learns about the shooting when watching an emergency news bulletin on his television, but his body and environment remain in color. Not until he calls his superior officers at the police station, when he is asked to go to the campus to help, does he and his world finally transition to black-and-white. His personal world does not change until he is summoned to go to the campus, as he realizes that he will inevitably be putting himself in danger. In short, the transition to black-and-white does not reflect the instant he learns of the shooting, but rather the instant he realizes that he will physically be present there. It is when the shooting directly involves another person that their individual, peaceful worlds disappear and lose their color.

Figure 23 *Tower*: Left: Officer Martinez awaiting to hear if he needs to come in to help on campus; Right: Martinez learns that he will indeed need to come out

Indeed, if black-and-white serves to make explicit a shared collective experience, then color serves as the aesthetic for private, separate, and individual experiences of peaceful normalcy. For McCoy and UT student John Fox, the film explicitly individualizes their experiences prior to them learning about the shooting. While the color scheme is generally uniform, each of the sequences around a particular character is paired with a specific song of the 1960s. These songs, while popular tunes of that time, are almost exclusive to each of the characters (the only exception is The Mamas & the Papas's "Monday Monday", which plays in scenes with Claire and Thomas as well as Aleck Hernandez), and play either diegetically over the radio, nondiegetically, or both. McCoy recalls listening to the country-western station on his car radio the morning of the shooting, which was playing Stonewall Jackson's "Waterloo". Later, as mentioned before, Lucky Luke Jacob's "Waltz Across Texas" also appears to play diegetically from his car radio. Fox, while playing chess at a friend's house, claims in an interview to have been listening to a different radio station, the Top 40. The film matches this account by inserting "Daydream" by The Lovin' Spoonful, which transitions from nondiegetic to diegetic when it appears to play on the radio in a bedroom where Fox and his friend play chess. Fox recalls a news bulletin interrupting the radio broadcast, and according to Fox, it claimed that someone with an air rifle was shooting from the tower. Though it is not clear whether Fox and his friend misheard the bulletin or that they indeed heard a misinformed report, they both walk to the tower out of curiosity. As they walk across

campus, the rock-and-roll song "She's So Satisfyin'" by the Apparitions plays nondiegetically. The film plays the song to indicate their unawareness, so even though they are clearly not listening to the radio, they might as well still be tuned in to the Top 40. While color establishes a mood of normalcy, the particular songs work to establish a sense of individualized moments. Just as the multiple radio and television broadcasts give way to a single emergency broadcast notification, the songs, as if individualized for the characters, immediately stop and give way to the film's main score that pervades throughout scenes of the shooting.

While the aesthetic significance of color in *Tower* seems clear, the ethical importance is perhaps made most clear near the end. In an interview with the actual Houston McCoy, he implicitly reveals the film's ethical reasoning in the aesthetic choice. He claims that he has often been asked how the tragedy had made him feel, to which he says, "How would I describe the colors of a rainbow to a person born blind?" His comment not only reveals the inability for him to truly communicate the experience with someone who was not there, but it also reveals a necessity of black-and-white. One can assume that McCoy and most others who experienced the shooting are not colorblind and that they thus optically observed the event in color. Yet the trauma of these experiences is so deep and personal that only through the intervention of animation and the washing out of color can such an event be re-created and made palatable for public viewing. This is in line with Janet Walker's theorization of "trauma films" which are "those that deal with

traumatic events in a nonrealist mode characterized by disturbance and fragmentation of the films' narrative and stylistic regimes" (19). True, Walker's theorization of "trauma films" is perhaps far more applicable to *Waltz with Bashir,* in that, as Roe argues, "Walker stresses the importance of seemingly false memories for our reconciliation of past trauma" (161). Yet, while the black-and-white serves various functions—as a marker of the archival in its matching the monochrome of other archival footage, as a visual marker of a physical traumatic experience, and as an aesthetic tool to help knit together each of the survivors' experiences into the fabric of a public, national tragedy—it is also "nonrealist" enough as to create a necessary distance from the event for the sake of both the subjects and the viewers.

Intervention of Live Action and Metadiscourse of Film Production

Though certainly not applicable to all animated documentaries, both *Waltz with Bashir* and *Tower* ultimately transition to more "traditional" live action forms of documentary in their respective latter parts. That these works eventually depart from their dominant aesthetic of animation into live action demonstrates a supposed need to do so, as if live action footage becomes a sort of prognostic cure to the indexical and representational problems of animation. Yet neither film champions live action as the ultimate form for exploring historical tragedies or individual traumatic experiences, but rather as necessary supplements to animation. Whereas *Waltz with Bashir* ends with a montage of live action video recordings of the aftermath of one of the massacres in Lebanon, *Tower* gradually reveals the actual faces and voices of the survivors, and eventually substitutes their live action testimonies for the animated, re-enacted ones. There is far less live action footage in *Waltz with Bashir* than in *Tower*, but the build-up to *Waltz with Bashir*'s transition to video footage of the massacres is heavily nuanced by stylistic choices in animation and sound. As Roe has argued, the footage should not only be read by what is shown, but also by the animation in the rest of the film (168). *Tower* conversely already uses a form of live action through archival footage throughout the film, but in transitioning to the live action forms of the actual, present-day survivors, it emphasizes a temporal leap from the past to the present. If animation and archival footage are the modes through which viewers directly experience the past in *Tower*, then

live action becomes the mode of reflection in the present. Live action also serves as a kind of jumping-off point from which the film also provides a metadiscourse on its own film production, which in turn, as Roe has argued, helps "authenticate" the animations' representations of the past (63).

Waltz with Bashir

Again, *Waltz with Bashir* is a kind of therapeutic act by Ari Folman, who is documenting his findings and memories through animation not just because it seems appropriate for exploring memory, but also because the animation process creates many layers of separation from the actual event. The process creates an even wider distance from the massacres—temporal and spatial—which thus mediates and eases the filmmakers' and viewers' exploration of the seemingly unspeakable. Yet *Waltz with Bashir* ends in a hard, shocking transition to a montage of on-site video recordings of the aftermath of one of the massacres. The footage reveals survivors, mostly women, shrieking and crying, and then cuts to a montage of other footage of dead bodies. Roe, who describes the film's ending in detail, ultimately argues, "The television news images may reveal the truth of the event of the massacre, but the truth of the experience is, for Folman, as much about its incomprehensibility and his amnesia as about what actually happened" (168). Roe is right to argue that while this footage might offer evidence of the fact that the massacres actually occurred, it does little to shed an ultimate truth or "narrative resolution" to the massacres and Folman's place in them (167). Moreover, she

continues, “This footage only makes sense in the context of the ninety minutes of animation that precedes it” (168). This assertion is also true, but it deserves further exploration. A crucial scene for examination is the final animated sequence that directly precedes the live action footage, as it reveals how the film structurally prepares for the climactic transition and how the film in fact does transition to the footage. Whereas Joseph Kraemer argues that the film positions the video footage as something that “somehow can satisfactorily sum up the truth of that calamity” (65), this section argues that the footage is actually just as lacking in conclusive information as the animations.

Narratively, *Waltz with Bashir* ends with the direct aftermath of the massacres, both in animations and the subsequent live action footage. After the conversation scene in which Ori Savan assesses why Folman felt guilty for firing (or not firing) the flares, Folman ceases giving his verbal testimony. Instead, Ron Ben-Yishai is privileged as the last witness in the film and even as the most authoritative witness to the aftermath of the massacres. According to Ben-Yishai, after the Phalangists were ordered to stop shooting, he and his television crew entered the camps, where he saw mounds of rubble and piles of human carcasses. The film clearly shows these images in the yellow animated flashbacks, in which a steady, melancholic score of violins and horns plays over them. Ben-Yishai even describes in detail his memory of seeing the head and hand of a dead little girl, peeking out from a pile of rubble. In a “slow-dolly shot”, the film gradually reveals in close-up the head of the girl, around which are several horseflies. This image

later serves as a visual match to the last shot of the film, which comes about as the film freeze-frames a portion of the video footage, revealing in close-up a dead young child's head (it is not clear whether the child is male or female) similarly peeking out from a pile of rubble and dead bodies. Indeed, that both images are strikingly similar reveals the narrative and formal significance of the animated image of the girl, especially because immediately after this image, the film finally begins stripping away its nondiegetic contrivances before fully transitioning to the video footage.

Figure 24 *Waltz with Bashir*: Left: animation of dead girl as recounted by Ben-Yishai; Right: last image in the film, a freeze-frame of video footage of a dead child

As the film cuts to Ben-Yishai exploring some alleyways, the melancholic score stops. Only feint recurring drums make up the rest of the nondiegetic score, which pervades the film even after the final image is shown. Ben-Yishai's older self remembers the alleyway being "piled up the to height of a man's chest with the bodies of young men." A cut to another scene from within an alleyway reveals the pile of bodies that Ben-Yishai allegedly saw. The "camera" "dollies" towards the bodies, with a group of women in the background walking down a main street. Ben-Yishai's voice-over finishes with a

conclusive realization, as he says, “That’s when I became aware of the results of the massacre.” At this point, the voice-over commentary ends, as the “camera” continues to dolly forth towards the many women walking down the street, and their traumatized wailing and moaning sounds take over the rest of the soundtrack. The film then cuts to the ultimate animated scene, which visually and aurally leads to two “narrative resolution[s]”, as Roe would say: the first being Folman’s memories of the event and his place in it and the second, through the reveal of the footage, an authoritative confirmation that the massacres indeed had occurred.

The “camera”, facing the backs of the women, “dollies” forth past them as they walk down the street, with the cluttered sounds of their agonizing cries amplified on the soundtrack. The buildings that enclose the street are clearly animated in 3D, with the dolly “movement” further enhancing the 3D effect. The “camera” finally moves past all the women and halts at the younger Folman standing guard with a machine gun. Upon closer inspection, this last scene is clearly reminiscent of the final part of Folman’s recurring dream. Again, his dream ends in a “long take” of him turning into a street of animated figures, who seem abnormally horrified given their exaggerated facial designs. Furthermore, the 3D animation in the dream is just as pronounced as that in the ending animation. In essence, then, the film is repackaging the sequence from Folman’s dream into the ultimate scene of realization, into a scene of, as Jonathan Rosenbaum infers, waking up from that dream (“One Key Event and Two Key Scenes”).

Figure 25 *Waltz with Bashir*: "Dolly shot" past women, done in 2D and 3D animation

Figure 26 *Waltz with Bashir*: Left: medium close-up of younger Folman looking out towards the animated women; Right: cut to "'reverse shot'" (Roe 167) of live action video footage of women sorrowfully walking towards camera

Figure 27 *Waltz with Bashir*: (read from top left to top right; continue from bottom left to bottom right) Ending of Folman's recurring dream, also done in 2D and 3D animation, in which the "camera" circles around the younger Folman

As the younger Folman stares past the “camera” at the women who gradually approach him, their cries become even louder. In fact, as Joseph Kraemer similarly indicates, the sounds of crying and screaming in the animation were directly taken from the subsequent footage (though of course this is only noticeable after the footage is revealed) (63). The sounds of course carry a clear indexical weight, and the realization that they are actually from the footage makes them seem in the animation as being more than merely diegetic. The young Folman breathes heavily and continues to stare aghast, until finally the film cuts to the video footage of the Palestinian women sorrowfully walking towards the camera. Indeed, the cut from Folman to the video footage of the

women creates an illusion of a "'reverse shot'", as Roe rightfully labels (167), and in doing so, the film implicitly places Folman, and the viewer, at the center of the aftermath. Finally, the film presents a montage of grainy video footage of the dead bodies, with only the reverberating, soft drum beats present on the soundtrack. The film finally ends on a freeze-frame of a dead child's head amongst a pile of rubble and carcasses, echoing and bookending the animated image of the young girl.

The last image, in echoing the animated scene of the girl, becomes the defining image with which the film positions its animation as an apt substitute for live action. The clear resemblance of the video footage of the child to Ben-Yishai's account of the girl is the film's way of legitimizing the authority of the animation, by way of positioning the video footage as another referent for the previous animations (in addition to the verbal testimonies, animatics, photographs, recorded footage, etc.). Yet in ending the way it does, the film does not absolve the dialectic between its animation and the conclusive archival footage, as neither truly reveals how the massacres occurred. While the archival footage certainly reveals "the truth of the event of the massacre[s]" (Roe 168) in that it confirms the *fact* that the massacres happened, it cannot and does not show the massacres as they actually *were happening*. Conversely, the animations hardly re-create the massacres, but rather the less-than-firsthand accounts from Harazi, Ben-Yishai, and Folman. If *Waltz with Bashir* is indeed "as much about [the massacres'] incomprehensibility…as about what actually happened" (Roe 168), this is in part because

the animations and the footage cannot completely fill in for each other's missing information.

Tower

In *Tower,* the transitions from the animated characters to the actual, and older, live action persons function as narrative devices, signifiers of shifts in time, and even as solutions to the "ontological confusion"[7] between the testimonies of the animated characters and those of the actual survivors. As narrative devices, the transitions happen at the respective moment when a character's "role" in the story of the shooting is about to end, when the narrative confirms that the character survived. These transitions also exemplify the biggest temporal shift in the film: while the film initially immerses the viewer in the shooting as it was happening, the transition to the actual survivors breaks that immersion by pivoting to the present of the film's production, a time nearly fifty years after the shooting. To understand the significance of this temporal shift, it is important to address Jaimie Baron's theory of the "archive effect" as experienced when viewing an "appropriation film" like *Tower*. The transitions also serve to help the film legitimize the testimonies given by the animated characters. More importantly, though, it is through the live action interviews that the film also begins to unveil *how* it was made.

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[7] I borrow a phrase that Annabelle Honess Roe uses in her description of how the documentary *Chicago 10* uses animation to distinguish its animation from live action film but also to mimetically substitute for the actual happening of the event it represents. She writes, "In short, [the animation] does not look like film and, contrary to the concerns Anneke M. Metz has about digital imagery in science documentaries, there is little danger of inciting ontological confusion" (57).

As Annabelle Honess Roe has similarly argued in her analysis of the animated documentaries of Bob Sabiston, the metadiscourse of film production further serves to help "authenticate" *Tower* as a documentary (63).

Narratively, the shift from animation to live action is often done at certain climactic points, points in which characters' respective "roles" in the shooting are about to come to an end. For example, both Claire Wilson James and John Fox are revealed roughly around the instant when Fox goes out and helps carry Claire out of danger. After this point, their "roles" are practically over. Claire is finally rescued and John finally overcame his fear of going out in the open to save her. Similarly, the real officer Martinez appears when he recounts finally shooting and killing the sniper on the roof of the tower, while the real Neal Spelce, the radio broadcaster who reported the shooting from his car radio, appears when he remembers the instant he learned and reported that the sniper was dead. In essence, the film transitions away from the animated characters to their actual counterparts at the respective moments when (or about when) the film confirms that they survived (Alas, the fact that the animated characters are giving testimony at all is evidence enough that they indeed survived,[8] but because the film presents the same animated characters in the re-created flashbacks and in the interviews, the film allows for a suspension of disbelief of the certainty of the characters' fates). It is at these respective points that the film can finally reveal the true diegetic present. In

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[8] Director Keith Maitland confirms this in an interview with *LA Weekly*.

finally revealing the temporal gap between the film's production and the event of the shooting, the film also begins a more reflective and therapeutic exploration of the tragedy.

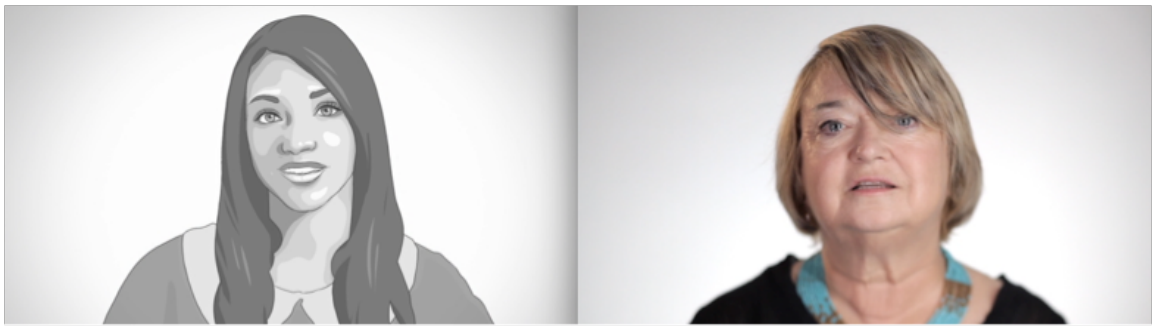

Figure 28 *Tower*: The film cuts from the animated, younger representation of Claire Wilson James (left) to the actual person nearly fifty years later (right)

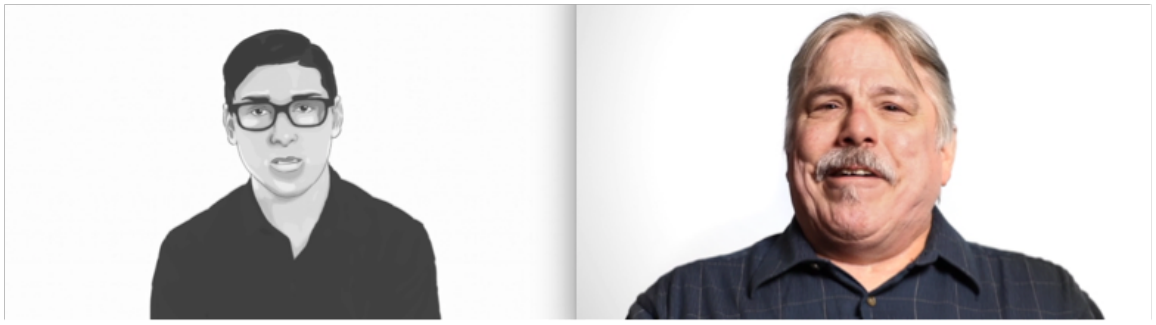

Figure 29 *Tower*: Left: the animated, younger representation of John Fox; Right: cut to the actual person nearly fifty years later

In addressing the temporal transition from the "past" in animation to the "present" in live action in *Tower*, it is important to understand Jaimie Baron's theory on what she calls the "archive effect". For Baron, archival documents in an "appropriation film"—one that "appropriates" archival footage from the past (7) (in this case, *Tower*)—are

experienced as "'archival' only insofar as the viewer of a given film perceives certain documents within that film as coming from another, previous – and primary – context of use or intended use" (7). In other words, she argues that viewers of an appropriation film experience the past, the "'archival'", by recognizing archival documents as having been produced in the past, and as now divorced from their original purpose. For Baron, when viewing an appropriation film, the archive effect occurs as a "product of…'temporal disparity'" (18), or when the "gap between the 'then' of the document's production and the 'now' of the appropriation film's production [is] made evident *within* the film" (22, emphasis in original). If animation has the ability to "conflate the 'then' and the 'now'" in documentaries, as Roe has argued (34), then in the case of *Tower*, the temporal "gap" between the "'then'" of the event and the "'now'" of the film's production is unveiled when the film transitions from the animated characters to the actual live action survivors. Of course, the "'temporal disparity'" between the animations and the archival footage is already evident, but because both serve to re-tell the story of the shooting and fill in otherwise missing information, they effectively work in tandem to create an impression of "being present" in the actual happening of the event as it had occurred. The live action footage of the actual survivors, however, clearly connotes "the present", a time understood and felt as happening nearly fifty years after the past, as well as a time of reflecting about that past.

If *Tower* initially poses its animation and use of actors as problematics of representation in documentary filmmaking, then it tries to absolve the problem by underscoring the components that fit neatly within accepted documentary practices and those that directly reflect the film's production. Indeed, as Roe argues, the metadiscourses of a film's production are important in the case of animated documentaries, as they help to "authenticate them as documentaries" (63). Elements that highlight the production of *Tower* are: the repetition of testimonies in the transition between the animated characters and the actual survivors; the inclusion of features that are normally edited out or digitally modified—such as time codes and a green screen—in the interview with the real Houston McCoy; the inclusion on the soundtrack of director Keith Maitland's off-screen questioning with one of the interviewees; and even the visual comparisons between the animated actors and the real people during the end credits.

In almost every transition from animated character to actual survivor, the film deliberately shows two versions of the same line being spoken. For example, when the animated Houston McCoy regretfully reflects about not taking out the sniper earlier, he first says, "If I would have just gone on in, if I had just gone right up to that elevator, pressed that button to the top floor[…]Gone on in and get him done." The film immediately cuts to a live action interview with the older, real McCoy, who begins by repeating almost word-for-word the last sentence: "*Go up and get him done*, then Billy Speed would still be alive" (emphasis added). The film repeats this technique one more

time. After the animated McCoy ends his interview by saying, "Shoulda coulda…But I didn't", the film again cuts back to the real McCoy, who sorrowfully says, "Shoulda, coulda, shoulda…Shoulda, coulda. But didn't." The filmmakers explicitly defend the authenticity and accuracy of the animated characters' testimonies by revealing them as having been spoken word-for-word by the actual survivors.

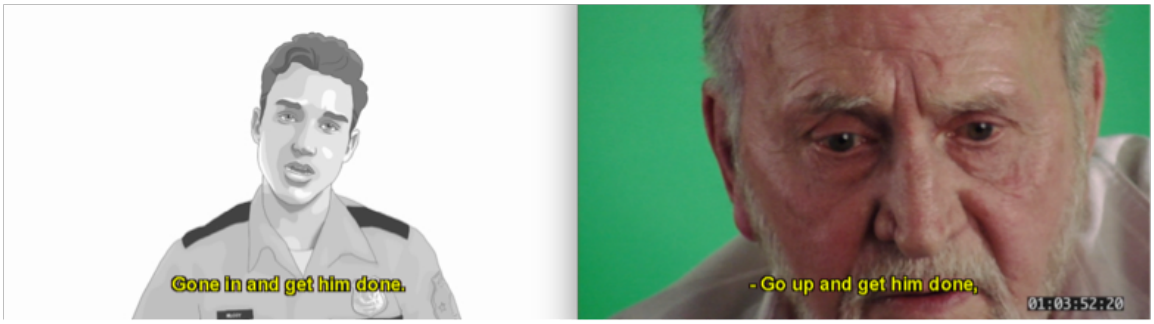

Figure 30 *Tower*: The animated, younger McCoy (left) says a sentence before the film immediately cuts to the real McCoy (right) who says almost the same thing

Unlike the rest of the live action interviews of survivors, the one of the real Houston McCoy was taken before the film's production officially began, as McCoy had died before then. This is extratextual information, however, as it is only made evident in the bonus features on the DVD ("After the Screener Q+A"). Nevertheless, while the video scan lines, unpolished sound, green screen, and time codes of the interview mark the footage as archival document—one that is untouched and unmediated—they also draw attention to the film's production of the other live action interviews. Every other interview includes each survivor in front of a bright white background, with polished

sound and photography. It is through the raw and untampered appearance of the McCoy interview that the polished nature (i.e. the digital alterations/enhancements to the images and sounds) in the other interviews becomes visible. By drawing attention to the digital mediation of the live action interviews, the film inevitably complicates their ontology. Conversely, the film also becomes more transparent and honest. Just as it responsibly qualifies the animated characters' testimonies with those of the actual people, it also makes bare some of its artificialities as a way of eliciting trust from viewers and proving its documentary status.

Another example of how *Tower* explicitly draws attention to its own production is the inclusion of director Maitland's off-screen commentary during one of the interviews. This is emblematic in the works of another animated documentary filmmaker, Bob Sabiston. According to Roe, Sabiston establishes an "interview context" in some of his films as a way of marking their documentary status (63). Specifically, he highlights the production aspects of conducting interviews. For example, as Roe observes in his film *Grasshopper* (2003), Sabiston's animated hand is shown hooking up a microphone to an interviewee (63). Additionally, Sabiston is heard giving questions and responses throughout the interview (63). *Tower* never allows the director or any other production crew to insert their bodies or voices into the film *except* in one brief instant near the film's end. As Claire concludes her thoughts on the sniper, Maitland asks off-screen, "Do you forgive him?" to which Claire responds, "I forgive him, yes." Before this point in the

film, the only voices were those of either the animated characters or the real survivors, so the film had often restricted its points of views to the levels of the survivor's personal memories. In briefly disclosing the presence of the filmmakers, *Tower* both draws attention to the production process of the interviews while also breaking the illusion of a restricted subjectivity.

After the film ends, the end credit sequence suitably unveils the obvious fact that the film employed actors to represent the younger versions of the survivors. However, by comparing the animated characters with archival photographs of the survivors from that time, the film again defends the accuracy of the animations and their close relationships with their real-life referents. In fact, with the exception of a few pieces of archival footage, this is the only time the film reveals photographic images of the survivors as they were in 1966. The film thus gives the animations a clearer ontological explanation, but it also does more than merely qualifying the authenticity of its animations and revealing another facet of its production process. By juxtaposing the animations with the photographs, it is attempting to bridge the gap between the mimetic, yet mediated animated representations and the actual survivors. Alas, just as the latter part of the film is about healing and reflecting, the film must, in the end, also try to come to terms with its dialectics of representation.

Figure 31 *Tower*: Sample from end credits; old photograph of actual Neal Spelce (above), compared with the animated version of actor playing him (below)

Figure 32 *Tower*: Sample from end credits; old photograph of actual Claire Wilson James (above), compared with animated version of actress playing her (below)

Conclusion

While the animations in *Waltz with Bashir* and *Tower* are effective as "representational strateg[ies]" in documentary filmmaking because of their "visual dialectic[s] of absence of excess" (Roe 39), they are also affective in their aesthetics in their ability to create new worlds that elicit a sense of immersion, a sense of "being present" in something, while also distancing viewers from the actual, horrific tragedies they represent. *Waltz with Bashir* perhaps does not posit its animation as reliably substitutive for live action footage, but it does illustrate a provocative, arresting world through which to explore the personal memories and experiences of the Lebanon War. Again, as Roe has pointed out, it further does this by consistently animating both the flashback sequences and the present-day interviews in similar fashions (163). Yet it is in the transition to the video footage that the authority of the animations to the "truth" of the massacres is paradoxically challenged and validated. While the video footage serves as evidence of the massacres and as a defining referent for the animations, it is insufficient in re-creating the massacres themselves or the experience of them. The animation in *Waltz with Bashir* certainly "exceeds" its role as a substitute for live action documentary filmmaking (Roe 72) and assumes an "evocative" role to "indicate the representation of subjective states of mind" (25). As is seen with the flares and the yellow monochromatic scheme, the animation often evokes Folman's subjective experience of the war and his personal journey in reclaiming his memory. Yet the animations hardly re-create the

massacres themselves. The dialectic between the animations and the video footage is certainly unresolved, but they both validate each other as necessary components in the film, as each fills in for what the other lacks.

Tower is certainly able to induce a sense of "being present" during the shooting by downplaying the temporal distance from the time of the event. Similar to *Waltz with Bashir*, it does so by animating both the interviewees and re-enactments in the same way so as to erase the temporal junctures between them. By having actors re-state the survivors' testimonies nearly word-for-word and re-enact what the survivors did during shooting, the film also makes the past the diegetic present of the narrative. Yet because of rotoscoping, the black-and-white color scheme, and the eventual departure from animation to live action and from the actors to the actual survivors, *Tower* also distances itself from the shooting out of necessity for the viewers and survivors, and even draws attention to the animation's unresolved dialectic of representation. The film cannot completely overcome the indexical and representational problems inherent in its animation, just as the survivors can never completely overcome the trauma of the shooting. Yet in a metadiscourse of the film's production, the film not only validates the accuracy of its animation, but it also induces a parallel between the processes of animation and the processes of personal reflection and healing.

Alas, while this report has tried to reveal the aesthetic significance of animation in these two animated documentaries, more work can certainly be done. While I

sometimes described animation using established language for live action camera movement in order to make this report more accessible, I acknowledge that animation cannot truly be described in the same ways as live action filmmaking. True, as Tom Gunning has argued, animation of any kind "requires photography as a means of mechanical reproduction" (38), but because there is no physical camera movement per se, describing animation movement in the way that I have, in terms live action filmmaking, sidesteps the truth about animation production. Further studies into how animation is produced and how movement is created will be crucial to future discussions of the role of animation in documentary modes of storytelling.

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